Office of the Ombudsman

Business Plan 2005 - 2006

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Message from the Ombudsman

This document has been prepared in keeping with our legislative mandate(s) and government priorities. It is designed to foster confidence in public administration and ensure our services are sensitive and responsive to citizens and government. This planning cycle will see the stabilization of the staffing process, greater focus and outreach in the areas of children, seniors and diversity. A reduction in time lines to complete investigations and the expansion of an early resolution prevention model will also occur. Inherent in the plan is the importance of human resources, communication, relationship building and training. The plan recognizes and serves to augment the important role public servants perform.

Dwight Bishop
Ombudsman

A. Mission

Foster confidence in the public service by promoting the principles of fairness, integrity and good governance.

B. Planning Context

The Ombudsman is established as an Officer of the House of Assembly, a commissioner for investigations. The Office of the Ombudsman investigates complaints arising from the administration of provincial or municipal laws within Nova Scotia. The Office of the Ombudsman may also initiate investigations of administrative activities and practices, referred to as an "Own Motion Investigation" or matters referred to it by a "committee of the House".

In September 2004, the mandate of the Office of the Ombudsman expanded to include responsibilities as set out in the *Regulations Respecting Civil Service Disclosure of Wrongdoing.*

The Ombudsman Act was amended in May 2004 and in December 2004, Cabinet approved the regulations which clarified our jurisdiction over a number of entities such as the school boards, child welfare agencies, licenced child caring facilities, nursing homes for the aged, residential care facilities (seniors) hospitals and community colleges.

In 2003-2004, the Office of the Ombudsman addressed 1031 jurisdictional complaints, and conducted 30 formal investigations of municipal or provincial governments. In addition, 870 non-jurisdictional inquiries were redirected to the proper authorities. Twenty-nine monthly reports were released to the Department of Justice and the Department of Community Services on custody and care issues. Work continued on the development and implementation of the residential child care facilities complaint resolution process. In May 2004 we commenced the implementation of an outreach service to senior citizens.

During the first nine months of fiscal 2004-2005, the office addressed 778 jurisdictional complaints (76% of fiscal 2003-2004), provided 514 referrals to non-jurisdictional inquiries (59% of the fiscal 2003-2004) and conducted 13 formal investigations (43% of fiscal 2003-2004). Additionally, 20 monthly reports were released to the Department of Justice and the Department of Community Services on custody and care issues.

In 2003-2004, we continued to expand our outreach role and made 25 presentations to the public including employees of municipal and provincial government reaching 233 individuals.
For the first nine months of fiscal 2004-2005 we conducted 36 presentations reaching approximately 518 individuals (an increase of 44 % of fiscal 2003 2004). We made 34 site visits, 29 of which were to the youth facilities, with 79 information sessions presented to148 youth in care or custody. Staff conducted site visits to other facilities in order to gain familiarity and

increase knowledge of various policies and procedures . We also made presentations or staffed information booths at educational facilities, service clubs, special events (approximately 825 individual received information material). We also began meeting deputy ministers, mayors, wardens and chief administrative officers throughout the province, reaching 22 senior government officials.

We are continuing to expand our collaborative initiatives with government officials and community groups. Progress was made in the area of public education measures, particularly with the seniors community.

In 2004/05, we received approval to restructure the Office of the Ombudsman. We will follow through on this initiative to ensure the Office has a permanent staff compliment.

C. Strategic Goals

In accomplishing its mission, the Office of the Ombudsman contributes to the Government's priority of fulfilling its role of providing responsible, accountable government. We may investigate complaints relating to the administration of any law of the Province which may include issues relating to any of the priorities identified by Government. This provides an opportunity to make recommendations to Government on how to improve the delivery of services.

In order to accomplish its mission, the Office of the Ombudsman has set the following goals for 2005-2006:

1. Quality complaint resolution process.

This goal is consistent with, and supports Government priorities by increasing public confidence and accountability of government in the delivery of programs and services.

2. Awareness, access and understanding of the Office of Ombudsman.

This goal is consistent with, and supports Government priorities by educating citizens and the Public Service on the principles of administrative fairness.

3. Fairness and accountability in public sector administration.

This goal is consistent with, and supports Government priorities by enhancing accountability in the delivery of programs and services.

4. Promote initiatives such as government policy development and review, as well as initiatives focusing on youth, seniors and cultural diversity.

This goal is consistent with, and supports Government priorities by increasing the knowledge of citizens and the Public Service and by reaching out to designated stakeholders (seniors, families and Nova Scotians in need, and cultural diversity.

D. Core Business Areas

1. *Complaint Processing*

Ensure citizen complaints are addressed in a timely, comprehensive, objective and independent manner through:

- investigation, assessment, and referrals
- utilization of alternate dispute resolution (ADR) processes
- formal investigation
- recommendations to improve the delivery of government services.

2. *Education*

Promote citizen and government awareness and understanding of the Office of the Ombudsman. Our communications strategy clarifies our role and mandate, and increases citizen's accessibility through:

- presentations/meetings
- pamphlets/brochures
- group targeting (i.e youth and seniors)
- increased media contact and coverage

3. *Public Service Administration and Good Governance*

Promote fairness and accountability in public sector administration through:

- identification of specific and systemic issues
- research and investigate systemic issues
- issuance of recommendations and monitoring compliance
- education/training

4. *Complaint Prevention/Reduction*

Promote a problem-solving model that embraces prevention, early identification, consultation and resolution of issues through:

- increasing Office of the Ombudsman presence, particularly with respect to target groups

- building relationships within government and segments of the community
- participating in policy development and review committees/processes
- utilizing ADR processes.

E. Priorities

The priorities set out in this business plan were developed based on a budget allocation of $1,152,000.00 (see schedule 1).

1. *Complaint Processing*

Receive and investigate complaints filed by citizens against provincial and municipal government departments, agencies, boards and commissions and work with departments and agencies to improve the administrative services.

Our priorities for 2005-2006 are to review and revise the complaint resolution processes to identify methods to provide more timely assessments and investigations, increase the use of ADR as well as conduct systemic reviews.

2. *Education*

Advise citizens of their right to access internal departmental and external complaint mechanisms, and of their right to access the Office of the Ombudsman.

One of our priority in 2005-2006 is to increase awareness of citizens, officials and employees of the Public Service of the role of the Ombudsman. A second priority is to increase awareness of the availability of our independent, objective review/complaint resolution mechanism which is based on the principles of administrative fairness and good governance.

3. *Public Service Administration and Good Governance*

Recommend and monitor amendments to policies, procedures and legislation arising from investigations and reviews. Through the recommending and monitoring component, the Office of the Ombudsman advises and educates citizens, elected officials and government employees of the principles of administrative fairness and good governance.

A priority in 2005 -2006 is to continue to develop a mutual relationship of trust and respect with government authorities to ensure implementation of recommendations. We will also increase

research to identify and investigate systemic issues impacting on the delivery of government services.

4. ***Complaint Prevention/Reduction***

Provide a service that promotes early intervention while maintaining independence from government.

Our priority in 2005-2006 is to increase requests from government officials to review proposed and existing legislation, regulations, polices and procedures.

A. Budget Context

(see attached schedule 1)

B. Performance Measures

(see attached template)

Schedule 1

Office of the Ombudsman Estimated Budget Expenditures	
Core Business	2004-2005 Actual
	$ Thousands
Administration, Investigation & Children's Section	$915,000.00
Total - Gross Current	$915,000.00
Total - Program Expenses Net of Recoveries	$915,000.00
Salaries and Benefits	$683,000.00
Funded Staff (FTE's)	12

Office of the Ombudsman Estimated Budget Expenditures	
Core Business	2005-2006
	$ Thousands
Administration, Investigation & Children's Section	$1,152,000.00
Total - Gross Current	$1,152,000.00
Total - Program Expenses Net of Recoveries	$1,152,000.00
Salaries and Benefits	$929,200.00
Funded Staff (FTE's)	14

Performance Measures

Strategic Goal: **Quality complaint resolution process**				
OUTCOME (immediate or inter-mediate)	MEASURE	DATA	TARGET	Strategic Actions to achieve target
An efficient and effective complaint resolution process	Timely completion of assessments	2001- 2002 - 3 weeks 2002-2003 - 6 working days 2003-2004 - 1 - 7 days*	2005-2006 - Maintain 2003-04 target of 1-7 days - 2006-2007 Maintain 2003 -2004 target of 1-7 days	Stabilize the workforce to reduce staff turnover and initiate training opportunities for staff
	Timely completion of formal investigations	2001-2002 - 12 months 2002-2003 - 13 months 2003-2004 - 16 months	2005-2006 - 12 months 2006-2007 - 9 months	Stabilize the workforce to reduce to staff turnover and initiate training opportunities for staff

Strategic Goal: **Quality complaint resolution process**				
OUTCOME (immediate or inter-mediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
Increased awareness of the role and mandate of the Office. Increase public confidence and accountability of government	Reduction in the number of formal investigations Increase usage of Alternate Dispute Resolution processes	2001-2002 - 66 2002-2003 - 47 2003-2004 - 30	2005-2006 - maintain current level 2006-2007 - 10% reduction 2005-2006 increase the use of ADR by 10% 2006-2007 increase the use of ADR by 15%	Educate government officials and public servants on the role and mandate of the Office

- Statistics format was modified in 2003-2004

Strategic Goal: **Awareness, access and understanding of the Office of Ombudsman**				
OUTCOME (immediate or inter-mediate)	MEASURE	DATA	TARGET	Strategic Actions to achieve target
Increased awareness of the principles of administrative fairness	Increase in the number of individuals receiving information on the role of the Office	2001-2002 - 485 individuals reached 2002-2003 - 448 individuals reached 2003-2004 - 381 individuals reached	2005-2006 maintain the number of individuals reached 2006-2007 - 10% increase in number of individuals reached	- Enhance our communication strategy by targeting government officials, seniors, youth, and other designated groups - Distribute new brochures - Host the 2005-2006 Canadian Council of Parliamentary Ombudsman Conference and introduce the new office logo

Strategic Goal: **Fairness and accountability in public sector administration.**				
OUTCOME (immediate or intermediate)	**MEASURE**	**DATA**	**TARGET**	**Strategic Actions to achieve target**
Accountability in the delivery of government programs and services	Number/percentage of recommendations accepted	2001-2002* 2002-2003* 2003-2004 - 64	2005-2006 - maintain current percentage 2006-2007 - 100% acceptance of recommendations	Enhance relationship with government and increase awareness of the role of the Office Participate in consultation with government relating to the delivery of programs and services provided

* Data was not tracked for 2001- 2002 or 2002-2003

Strategic Goal: Promote initiatives such as government policy development and review, as well as initiatives focusing on youth, seniors and cultural diversity.				
OUTCOME (immediate or inter-mediate)	MEASURE	DATA	TARGET	Strategic Actions to achieve target
Increase the number of requests for reviews of legislation, regulations and policies	Number of requests received by government	2001-2002* 2002-2003* 2003-2004 - 4	2006-2007 Increase the number of reviews of legislation, regulations and policies	Communicate to government officials our willingness to participate in this process
Increase presence in areas of government, citizens, and areas relating to youth, seniors, cultural diversity	Number of site visits conducted	2001-2002 * 2002-2003* 2003-2004 - 25	increase the number of site visits by 10%	Develop a strategy to increase presence and provide accessibility to group homes, seniors, youth, and other designated groups

*Tracking began in 2003-04